

Fly Creeker

NEWSLETTER of the FLY CREEK AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY (FCAHS)

Editor: Bill Deane, PO Box 47, Fly Creek, NY 13337; 607- 547-5786; Editor@FCAHS.org

Staff: Jim Atwell, Elaine Harvey, Tom Heitz, Carolyn McLean, Sherlee Rathbone, Freida Snyder

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NEWS BRIEFS

- **Record-Breaking ...** The Society has set a new record for membership: 214, breaking the mark of 203 set four years ago. Welcome to the new members that put us over the top: Theodore & Celia Lamb, Jeffrey R. & Audrey C. Murray, and Helen J. Winne & family. We also received renewals from John Mitchell, contributing members **Mike & Betty Staffin**, and Ronald & Eleanor Vibbard.
- **Historic Generosity ...** So far \$1,350 has been donated to our new Historic District Fund. The generous donors are, alphabetically, Daniels Brothers Auto, Cynthia Ekeland, Fly Creek Cider Mill & Orchard, Mercedes Rudkin Gotwald, Claire Kepner, John & Linda Kosmer, Carl & Inga Roemer, Robert B. Seaver, and Jim & Margaret Wolff. This is in addition to the \$1,000 the Society voted to donate, and the \$2,000 we expect from Otsego 2000. According to Jim Atwell, the Historic District applications are being examined through this month, and our chances look excellent. Jim Wolff will be reporting further during the July meeting.
- **History of Fly Creek ...** Several nearby communities have produced area histories, but Fly Creek hasn't. New members of the Publications Committee have revived the idea of our Society producing such a book. To do so, we will need input and help from FCAHS members. What should be included in the book? Who is willing to help do some of the necessary research and writing? Suggestions and submissions are welcome. And we still await help in updating the *Fly Creek Area Yesteryear* booklet.
- **Squaring Off ...** The monthly schedule of square and round dances resumed in May. Dances are held at the FCAHS/Grange building on the first Saturday of each month through November, from 7-10 PM. Admission is free, and refreshments are available for purchase, with proceeds going to the FCAHS. The remaining dances of 2005 are slated for August 6, September 3, October 1, and November 5 (also a covered-dish on this date).
- **No Early Birds ...** Start getting your "excess treasures" ready: the annual Fly Creek Community/Yard Sale Day will be held on Saturday, August 27. Among the features will be a Chinese auction, an art show, and our famous "good eats" at the FCAHS/Grange building. We will be asking for people to help stage this major fund-raising event by working on one or more of the committees involved.
- **Gone But Not Forgotten ...** The Society has learned of the recent deaths of two former members, Robert Norris and Lois Streett. Bob, who died December 30, 2004, was a member of the Society from its inception through 2001. Lois, who died April 6, was a member from 2001-03 and contributed interesting articles to the Winter and Spring, 2001 issues of the *Fly Creeker*. We extend our sympathies to their loved ones.
- **Getting Ready ...** Thanks to the efforts of Jim Wolff, Cynthia Ekeland, and Bill Deane, the FCAHS has been awarded a "Get Ready" grant from the Grants for Museum Advancement Program of the New York State Council on the Arts, administered by the Upstate History Alliance. The grant provides us with a professional who will work with our organization to introduce strategic planning concepts. The facilitator assigned to us is named Bruce Moseley. Upon completing this grant, we could qualify for the program's subsequent "Get Set" and "Go" grants.

NEWS BRIEFS, Continued

- **It's Not Too Late to Nominate ...** On May 12 the FCAHS Trustees appointed Claire Kepner, Richie Carr, and Elaine Harvey to comprise this year's Nomination Committee. The three will be seeking candidates for the positions of President, Vice-President, Secretary, and one Trustee for the August 24 elections. Anyone interested in serving should contact one of the committee members.
- **Building News ...** MerriLynn Fish (547-9335) will be keeping regular hours at the FCAHS building's archive room this summer, Monday through Thursday from 10-4. She will be updating our accession list and organizing our photo and document collections. Incidentally, FCAHS member Jim Yourno will soon be upgrading the lighting and electric outlets in this room.
- **Otsego 2000 Awards ...** During a ceremony and reception at the FCAHS/Grange building on May 27, Otsego 2000 presented its 2005 Historic Preservation Awards for Otsego and Schoharie Counties. The FCAHS co-sponsored the event. Awards were presented to Anita Harrison (Career Achievement), the Van Patten and Beardslee Hop Houses (Rehabilitation), Gilbert Lake State Park (Stewardship), the video *Richmondville Days* (Special Nomination), and the J. H. Rushton row-and-sail boat *Felicity* and the newspaper *The Route 20 Pulse* (Honorable Mention).

MEETINGS

The next three Society meetings are scheduled for July 27, August 24, and September 28, 2005. FCAHS meetings are generally held on the fourth Wednesday of each month beginning at 7 PM, and are open to the public. They are normally staged at the FCAHS Building/Grange Hall on Cemetery Road, Fly Creek, one-tenth of a mile from the blinker light.

In July, Sherlee Rathbone will present "Where the Bones Are Buried," and Jim Wolff will give a brief progress report on the Fly Creek Historic District project. August will see the Society's Annual Meeting, featuring committee reports and officer elections, and preceded at 6:00 by a covered-dish dinner. And, in September, Richard and Sandy DeRosa will present "The best of All Perennials: Day Lilies." As Richard and Sandy prepared for retirement, he from teaching and she from nursing, they founded Hawthorne Hill Farm, which during the growing season is a blaze of beautiful color.

The three most recent meetings of the FCAHS were held on April 27, May 25, and June 22. In April, Dennis Corcoran presented "The Conspiracy of Benedict Arnold and Major John André." Dennis is a retired teacher from the Hendrick Hudson School District in Westchester County, and a member of the Mt. Pleasant Historical Society. Using a slide presentation he showed that, if certain events had played out differently during this September, 1780 affair, the outcome of the American Revolution might have been a British victory. Dennis was dressed in appropriate costume, and closed with a Cooperstown connection: Major André's three captors – David Williams, John Paulding, and Isaac Van Wart – are immortalized by "life masks" crafted in the 1820s by John Henri Browere, and now housed at the Fenimore Art Museum.

In May, more than 80 people heard Mary Leonard speak on "Container Gardening." Mary and her husband Brent have owned Carefree Gardens in Cooperstown for 21 years. She gave an interesting talk and showed how and what to plant in container gardens.

And in June, Scottie Baker presented "On the Water: Preserving Classic Wooden Boats." Scottie has been paddling and restoring wooden boats for many years and shared some of her "soulful" experiences along the way. She brought a restored canoe along with books, posters, photos, and memorabilia, and highlighted her presentation with a video. Sue Melchior read three appropriate poems and Jim Atwell recited his topical essay, "Like Somebody's Old Hound," before Scottie closed the program with a canoeing song, singing and playing the ukulele beautifully.

Jean T. Knapp, a member since 1989, died April 27, 2005 at age 95. Emma Imogene Turner was born in the Thanksgiving Hospital on August 1, 1909. She married Ernest "Brig" Knapp on March 20, 1935, and they were married for 58 years. Brig died on October 19, 1993, but Jean is survived by their four daughters and their families, including nine grandchildren and six great-grandchildren. We offer our condolences to all of them.

CHRISTIANSSEN MEMORIES

Hartwick V. "Harvey" Christiansen, who died at age 96 last November 15, attended the Fork Shop School between 1922-24. He and Elfreida Wart were the two eighth graders; among the other 18 students in the school were ones named Andrews, Johnson, Kane, Krisch, Lake, Thorton, Trinkaus, and Turner.

Grace Loudon was superintendent of the school, Al William was the treasurer of the district, and Vera Hickling was the teacher. She drove a horse and buggy from Phoenix Mills, and stored it at the Jarvis place during the day. This was also where the school's drinking water was secured. They filled up a pail each day, and everyone used the same dipper. The "bathroom" consisted of a big pit behind the school, with a catalogue for toilet paper.

Harvey left school after reaching the mandatory age of 16, to tend the family farm so his father could return to the mason trade (at 18 Harvey learned that trade, too). Milk was sent by trolley to the milk plant. The cellar of the farmhouse was always filled with water, and the house was eventually demolished, though the red barn still stands. The family moved to Fly Creek in the fall of 1929 to the house currently owned by Harvey's sister, Gerda Winnie, at 6272 State Highway 28. I married Harvey on June 2, 1946, and we moved to Sebring, Florida in 1987.

I was a member of a Fly Creek team in the Cooperstown Women's Bowling League, along with Helen Winnie, Polly Selan, and Emma Zigon. "Jonesey" sponsored us at one state tournament, and we all wore milk chocolate matching dresses with a "Jones Hardware" sign on the back. At another tournament we had pastel dresses with "Baseball Hall of Fame" signs on the back. Other bowlers included Hattie Gage, Marjorie Roberts (an art teacher at Cooperstown High School), and Gerda Winnie. I served as president of the league one year.

Pictured below is the home Harvey and I built in 1947, and where we lived until 1974. The house still stands across the road from Bill and Pam Deane's home on State Highway 28. This is one of several Fly Creek area photos I recently donated to the Society, along with Harvey's "honorable discharge" from the Volunteer Fire Department of Fly Creek. He served the department from July 1948 through May 1966.

Some time I will submit some information on our home extension group, and the "Cheerful Chicks" and "Happy Wanderers" 4-H Clubs. [Submitted by Catherine Christiansen]

RANDOM MEMORIES of the FLY CREEK AREA

Johnson House was a one-room schoolhouse, moved from just this side of Bill Talbot's home, in the Taylor Hill section of Fly Creek Valley. Prior to that there was a sawmill owned by a man named Folts. Folts, who had a drinking problem, lost this business, and later built sawmills near where Oaks Creek intersects with State Highway 28, and at Lydell Corners (also on 28, just over the Town line in Exeter), with the same results.

The old creamery (the building beside the former Fly Creek trolley station, now Les Sittler's law office) on Cemetery Road was used in the 1940s to process chickens. Blood and manure from this enterprise was put on the nearby Fitch property, helping to grow a lot of beans, he said for the U.S. Army.

Percy Williams owned a garage on County Route 26, between the current Fly Creek General Store and Post Office. He sold Blue Sunoco there. Fred Dulin owned the corner across Route 26 from there (now the consignment shop), where he had an Esso station and a garage underneath it.

Sam Hunter owned the place on the left side of the Grange (now owned by Youngs) and the small building was a store. When he became Postmaster in 1915 he moved to where Helen Davis now lives, behind Portabello's restaurant. A building larger than the one near his house was a post office and store.

Near the trolley station, now Les Sittler's law office on Cemetery Road, there was a large house owned by a man named Cook. He picked up garbage by horse and wagon. Some relatives were from near Buffalo.

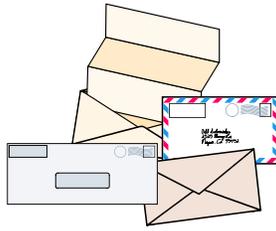
People around here were very clannish. My father tried to join the Grange by paying the \$5 annual dues, and was told to spend it on his family.

Scarlet fever was still a health concern. Both my sister and brother had it and were quarantined for 21 days. E. G. Foster owned a store and would extend credit, but would not let Pop in the store and would not take his money until the quarantine was lifted.

My father, Hubert Andrews, was born in Fork Shop in a house, no longer there, across from Kukenberger's barn on County Route 26. His older brothers Stanley and Harry attended school in Fork Shop. They moved to Schuyler Lake, where my grandfather James ran a store. James died when my father was five years old. Hubert was farmed out to the Jim Byard family; when he came back he lived at Whigs Corners and on Susquehanna Avenue, before he and his brother shipped to New York City with the National Guard. With the Army in World War I, since he was married and had two children Hubert was sent to Albany while his brothers were shipped to France. He later lived in Toddsville, then Fork Shop, the second building on the left across the bridge, then to Fly Creek.

The house Anthony Cankar lived in (across from the Grange, the next-to-last house before the cemetery), a person named Weigel sold refrigerators, etc. He was also the man who, with a rope, entered a burning house near the bridge on Route 28 in Oaksville. He was trying to save a boy, but the boy died of smoke inhalation. [Submitted by Art Andrews]

Below is a 1972 clipping that was recently found in the Schoolhouse Furniture store by FCAHS members Garry and Heidi Barton. Scottie Baker sold the business to the Bartons in 2003, and the store is again for sale today.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The *Fly Creeker* will print letters of general interest about area history, the Society, or the newsletter itself. The Editor reserves the right to edit letters for grammar, space, etc. Address correspondence to Bill Deane, at P.O. Box 47, Fly Creek, NY 13337; or e-mail to DizDeane@USAdatanet.net.

As usual, I enjoyed the Spring 2005 *Fly Creeker*, especially the article about Isaac Singer. This gave me the idea that, even though it is a little outside of the Fly Creek area, it would be nice to have an article about the Duke's Oak, located just above the turn-off from Route 80 to Allen's Lake Road. I believe there is a historic marker there.

Driving up the West Otsego Lake Road on a beautiful moonlit night many years ago, little did I realize what an enchanted evening was in store. *Romeo and Juliet* was playing on the spacious and knolly lawn of Pierson Terrace, with floodlights spaced here and there. Audience members – sitting in chairs on the lawn in the soft summer breeze – were thrilled by the actors and actresses floating in and out among the trees and knolls. Among the branches of the trees there was a delightful balcony scene.

Such was the presentation of Randolph Somerville, a Professor of Dramatic Arts of New York University at Oneonta, and native of the Town of Maryland. Professor Somerville purchased the property known as Pierson Terrace in November of 1935, and named it "Duke's Oak." He eventually sold the property due to ill health, and Shakespearean plays gave way to more-modern stories. One of the best I saw there was *The Diary of Ann Frank*, better than any Broadway show I saw.

Katharine B. Hanor, Cooperstown, NY
